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**From:** Candace Jones [mailto:givemeshelter2@gmail.com]

**Sent:** Sunday, September 28, 2008 7:42 PM

**To:** Exec.Sims@kingcounty.gov; KCC, Comments

**Subject:** "No Kill" sounds like a great idea BUT.....

Progress Aplenty and More to Come

September 28, 2008

King County Animal Shelters and staff have come under a lot of criticism lately. Some of it warranted, most of it not. When you convert a dairy barn to an animal shelter and operate with fairly fixed funding for 20 + years, the physical facilities are likely to be less than ideal. You can also expect the staff to be running hard and staying in the same place.

That is indeed what Nathan "No Kill Advocate" Winograd found. (He was hired as a consultant for \$35,000.) While many of his allegations were untrue or overstated, it is true that the facilities were in desperate need of improvement. A team of shelter specialists (5 of them, at a total cost of \$5000) sent from the University of California Davis found similarly.

The striking differences between the two reports were the constructive suggestions made by the Davis team and their recognition that the staff was doing their best with the resources available to them.

Dr. Crauer and his volunteers' severe allegations are not borne out by those of us who have worked at King County Animal Care and Control, (KCACC) for years (see signatures below). I suspect there is a serious lack of shelter experience in the group of volunteer veterinarians. This was confirmed in my subsequent conversation with Dr. Crauer. Of the 8 veterinarians only he and one other had shelter experience. Per Wendy Keller, Interim Director of KCACC, the other veterinarian in the group who had shelter experience wrote a reasoned and reasonable review of the shelter. She also made specific, practical suggestions that the shelter adopted. Dr. Crauer refused to tell me what his shelter experience is but admitted he had not worked at Seattle Animal Control, PAWS, or the Humane Society in Bellevue. Other than his recent volunteer work at KCACC, he has no local shelter experience he is willing to discuss. He also stated that he is not an advocate of "no kill" and that he thinks the mandated 20% euthanasia rate is a bad idea.

Because resources are limited at any shelter, care giving must be rationed and it becomes necessary to practice "population medicine", i.e. the principal of "greatest good for the greatest number". Large animal and shelter veterinarians understand this, as does Dr. Crauer.

Add to that the sudden imposition of "no kill". Your shelter population jumps up dramatically but you are unable to remove disease from the facility. Dr. Crauer was quoted on KOMO as saying that the medicine at the shelter consisted of "absolute malpractice and neglect". As a veterinarian who did relief work for 20 years, has been in over 90 clinics in the area, and served on the Professional Relations (ethics review) Committee for more than 6 years I can assure Dr. Crauer that, "That dog won't hunt".

Dr. Crauer also alleged major amounts of euthanasia solution were unaccounted for at the shelter. A review of the shelter euthanasia logs and records by the DEA this month revealed less than one tenth of one percent discrepancy. I suspect Dr. Crauer's clinic can't show a better record. Dr. Crauer and his volunteer veterinarians threw KCACC a lead life preserver. He owes someone an apology.

Seattle Animal Control, which is recognized nationwide as a model shelter, is responsible for less than 100 square miles. It has almost exactly the same budget and number of animal control officers as King County Animal Care and Control. KCACC is responsible for over 2000 square miles and has twice as many animals incoming as Seattle Animal Control. Is it any wonder that they have to prioritize stray dog calls?

#### THE GOOD NEWS!!

In April, the King County Council allocated \$965,000 to pay for improvements. Vast improvements have been made. Before my last visit, September 22, I was previously in the Kent shelter 6 months ago for one of Nathan Winograd's talks. The changes since then are phenomenal, with more to come.

- Over 100 small cat cages have been swapped for new, larger kennels.
- All cats get bedding which will include perches and boxes (not enough room in the previous cages for these).
- Cat isolation has a new, separate, negative ventilation system that prevents air borne pathogens from entering the rest of the shelter.
- In dog runs, grates and easily cleanable beds (as opposed to blankets) have been installed which have decreased disease transmission. More beds are needed.
- Volunteers now take dogs for exercise and "quality time" on a daily basis. Before, there wasn't a safe area to do this.
- More cat "hugging" areas have been established to improve kitty quality of life.
- Written protocols have been established and are in force for cleaning practices and the movement of sick and healthy animals. More are coming.
- Improved computer animal tracking is in place and continues to get better.

- Improved storage, sanitation, and replacement of faulty equipment has eliminated rodent intrusions.
- Expanded shelter hours, veterinary coverage, and volunteer participation allows greater public access and animal interaction with people.
- New staff members have been added (though still below what Davis recommends) and, hopefully, more are on the way.

Currently the ratio of animals in the shelter to care-giving staff is around 100:1; and that is if no one calls in sick. You try cleaning that many cages and feeding the animals at least twice a day. In your copious spare time, you also escort people through who are looking for lost pets. A more reasonable ratio is 50:1.

Expanded volunteer programs, outreach and communications have allowed for more foster homes and exposure to more possible adopters. Currently, due to the abrupt increase in the number of cats at the shelter, there are many cats in temporary housing. They are in covered but not walled-in areas and adjustments will have to be made before colder weather. As I walked through all of the wards, I heard no sneezing except in cat isolation. I heard no coughing in the dog runs. Unheard of in a shelter but it will not continue if the animal population persists in outgrowing the facilities.

Looking forward, the County's plans a modular unit in the south parking lot to contain cats ready for adoption and cats returning from foster care. That will open up kennel space inside the current facility and allow greater separation within the population. Even now, the reorganization of the shelter space is incredible.

Nationwide, shelters that have tried to maintain open admission and artificially imposed euthanasia restrictions and have run into problems. See New York Times, Feb 15, 2007, 1,000 Dogs and Cats Killed After Outbreak at Shelter, link <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/02/16/us/16animals.html?scp=1&sq=100%20Dogs%20and%20Cats%20killed&st=cse> It is one of many examples. Locally, good shelters have had to restrict incoming animals to reduce euthanasia and maintain the health of their custodial animals. If the taxpayers of King County are not prepared to be pet owners of last resort, they should ask themselves the following questions:

- In one of his talks, Nathan Winograd mentioned the Tompkins Shelter in NY as a prime example of a "No kill" shelter that had open admission and was doing well. He was director when they went "No kill". When the Tompkins Shelter was asked today about bringing in a litter of kittens, they requested that the kittens not be brought in for 2 weeks. There is a fee for accepting owned kittens and if there was any urgency a pet owner counseling appointment was required. People eager to get rid of a litter may not wait two weeks, or make an appointment, much less pay. Previously, (April 2008) in kitten season, callers were simply told, "We aren't taking kittens right now". They are getting cagier.

Where do those kittens go?

- PAWS no longer accepts animals when the shelter is full and refuses a majority of the ones who have significant impediment to their adoption.

Where do those animals go?

- There are veterinarians who refuse to euthanize animals if they are fixable even if the "fix" costs thousands of dollars.

If the owners can't afford it, where do those animals go?

- When some of the local, so-called "no kill", limited entry shelters go on a "rescue", they come back with a majority of "cute fuzzies" and leave behind a preponderance of "inconvenient animals".

Where do those "inconvenient" animals go?

- The Humane Society in Tacoma asks for \$50+ for the first kitten turned in and \$15 for each additional kitten.

If the owners can't afford it, where do those kittens go?

- The Humane Society of Tacoma, like many shelters and rescue groups, also refuses owner released pit bulls.

Where do those animals go? Are they the ones running loose in your neighborhood?

I believe in quality of life. I believe a tax supported animal shelter should accept all animals presented. Otherwise, I think you encourage owners to abandon animals or end their lives inhumanely. I think, ideally, ALL animal shelters would be like "home" for the animals - the place where, when you (=the animal) go there, they have to take you in. I want all the shelters to be scrupulous in keeping track of why they are euthanizing animals. Otherwise, the overpopulation problem becomes obscured.

I predict, however, that the currently imposed euthanasia rates will result in ever expanding warehousing of the animals at KCACC, not quality of life. It will be easy to tell this is happening as the average lengths of time in the shelter will get progressively longer and the number of animals for which the shelter is responsible will continue to climb.

The real way to reduce euthanasia is low cost spay and neuter and the education of the community that overpopulation and lack of appropriate homes is the biggest single cause of animal death in this country today. I am afraid that we, as a community, are not yet that enlightened but I look forward to the day we are.

I hope this experimental project (mandated lower euthanasia rates) of the King County Council works, but it isn't clear to me this for the good of the animals. I hope it doesn't result in more animals running loose, getting car hit, and endangering human health. And I really hope that if the Council decides to privatize the shelter, that they first scrutinize the shelters of the proposed contractor, their practices, facilities AND their finances. If King County builds an animal shelter, I hope they maintain control and ownership AND the current momentum to make the shelter what it should be. This is a work in progress and, while much progress has been made, there is plenty left to do. I am sure the Council is trying to do the "right" thing, but this needs to be about the animals, their quality of life, and the sustainability of their care.

N. Candace Jones, DVM

Medical Director of VCA Alderwood Animal Hospital 2 ½ + years  
Humane Society, Bellevue 6+ years as an employee  
Frequent relief/substitute veterinarian at PAWS, Seattle Animal  
Control, Seattle/King County Humane Society (in Bellevue) and  
KCACC over a 20 year period  
Volunteer member of King County Professional Relations (=ethics)  
Committee 6+years

We have read the above letter and approve its contents:

Bill Rosolowsky, DVM

Owner 3 doctor private practice 15 years  
Medical Director Bellevue Animal Hospital 2 years  
Substitute veterinarian with relief experience in KCACC, Seattle Animal Control, and  
Seattle King County Humane Society shelters

Bill Larson, DVM

Owner, Peninsula Mobile Veterinary Clinic PS, Poulsbo, WA  
Board Member, Kitsap Humane Society, Silverdale, WA  
Member of the American Association of Shelter Veterinarians  
Associate Veterinarian in private practice in Edmonds, WA and  
Silverdale WA 1999-2006  
Shelter Veterinarian, KCACC 1996-1999  
Shelter Veterinarian, Humane Society for Seattle King Co, 1995-1996  
Shelter Veterinarian, Progressive Animal Welfare Society, 1993-1995  
Spay/Neuter surgeon volunteer and paid for The Feral Cat Spay/Neuter Project,  
Seattle WA, 1997-2007  
Relief veterinarian, Seattle Animal Control, mid 1990's  
Volunteer veterinary services post Hurricane Katrina, Houma, LA,  
Fall, 2005  
Senior year elective quarter in Shelter Medicine at The Ohio State University  
College of Veterinary Medicine, 1992

Betsy Larson, DVM.

Relief (and volunteer)-S/N and shelter. Animal welfare organizations, including KCACC

Feral Cat S/N Project, N.O.A.H.

Previously Shelter Veterinarian 14 years, H.S for Tacoma/Pierce Co Association of  
Shelter Veterinarians member